Little Pioneers of the Fir-Tree Country

By
Mabel G. Cleland

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LITTLE PIONEERS OF THE FIR-TREE COUNTRY

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WHEN the children and the grandchildren gathered at Grandmother's for Christmas week, Aunt Pat came back from Oregon and told them wonderful stories of that country. The stories were of true experiences in the far Northwest. The heroes and heroines were pioneer fathers and mothers and their little children, for whom they were able to make Christmas merry in spite of all their hardships and the Indians.

Mrs. Cleland writes with a charming touch and knows well the type of incident that appeals most strongly to the little reader. Incidentally there is much information gathered into these stories about a pioneer period which was, in its way, as interesting as the early days around Plymouth.

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LITTLE PIONEERS OF THE FIR-TREE COUNTRY

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HE WENT DOWN THE ROW, STUFFING THEM INTO HIS MOUTH (*page* 38)

Little Pioneers of the Fir-Tree Country

BY

MABEL GOODWIN CLELAND

With Illustrations

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A PREFACE WHICH IS MEANT TO BE READ

Little people often skip this page of their story-books. But this one is quite important, because, you see, if you do not read it you never will know that all the children in this little book were sure-enough live children, and that the stories are true, and things that the stories say happened really did happen in the Northwest Country, just as they are in the book.

MABEL GOODWIN CLELAND

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He pulled her in to safety 112

Drawn by Helen F. Lyon

LITTLE PIONEERS OF THE FIR-TREE COUNTRY

A STORY OF CHRISTMAS IN THE NORTHWEST COUNTRY

GREEN garlands wound the stair rail and twined the white pillars between the two old-fashioned parlors. Holly wreaths hung at the windows and fires crackled on three hearths which could be seen the minute one opened the front door. Red roses stood in a tall vase, and a great, splashy poinsettia was thrust into the old brass bowl in the back of the hall.

As plain as words the house cried, "MERRY CHRISTMAS!"

And dear little Grandmother, with her soft gray hair and gentle voice, was

watching, with a faint roseleaf flush on her wrinkled cheeks, for the sound of the first motor.

Grandmother's children and her grandchildren were coming home for Christmas week—Aunt Em, with her great boys nearly old enough for college; and Aunt Sue, with her three little girls; and Uncle Jack, with his five motherless little ones; and Uncle Luke and his girl wife; and even Aunt Pat, who had been for years way out on the West Coast, and who hadn't any little boys and girls or husband or anything.

Aunt Pat had been to China and Alaska and lots of places, and all the little cousins wondered if maybe she wouldn't seem like a truly auntie at all, but that was before she came.

Now, you would think that with all that big, loving family in a big, loving house, with Christmas wrapping them all

up in a glad, loving-giving spirit, there couldn't possibly be anything but happiness.

But — sad as it seems to tell it, after all the jolly time of getting there was over, and everybody had said how much everybody had grown, and how much everybody looked like their mothers and fathers and everything, and then after dinner and the wonderful, wonderful tree on Christmas Eve, and the morning with its stockings to unpack and its dozens of surprises — everybody began to get tired and wonder what to do next, and all the toys seemed stale and nobody wanted to read, and Aunt Pat sat right down on the rug in front of the biggest fire, and, not looking at anybody at all, but looking into the fire, she said:

"I just wonder if anybody in this room would like to hear about a Christmas way out in the Northwest Country, when

the Indians were still savages and when homes were miles and long miles apart."

Long before she had finished speaking, there was a soft scramble to "sit next," and before she got to "Once upon a time," every child was listening.

"It was nearly Christmas," she began, "and in the Oregon Country it was cold —not crisp, snowy cold, with sunshine and nipping winds and solid blue ice, but drippy, drizzly cold, with a mist which hung in the tops of the tall firs, and blotted out the little patch of blue sky which the children were accustomed to see.

"All about them, on every side, was the forest of great trees, so close together and so tall that, when their father had cut the little clearing for the cabin, they looked up as from the bottom of a well.

"That was two years ago, and now the clearing was a little bigger, but Father was gone and people called Mother 'the

widow Barton,' and things were very hard.

"Mary was only ten, and there were four children younger than she, and Mary was holding the baby and telling them the things she remembered about Christmas and Santa Claus when the family had lived in Ohio.

"'And every single year,' she said, 'he'd come and fill our stockings full-up-to-the-top, if we just hung 'em up, and he'd put things on the floor to play with, and once he brought me a bee-yutiful doll with a silk dress and open-and-shut-real-eyes. An'-an' he'd put goodies in.'

"'What's goodies?' asked Paul, who was too little to remember Ohio.

"Mary sighed. 'Candy and nuts and raisins and figs and an orange and—just everything.'

"Mary sighed. Then Huey sighed. Then Paul sighed. Then baby, who was

always doing something funny, sighed too, and everybody laughed.

"But the laugh wasn't quite as deep as all the sighs had been, because, while they were talking about goodies, every single little heart knew that its own little tummy was hungry, hungry because since Father went away there was no one to shoot deer and Mother was a very poor fisherman, and there was nothing to eat, day after day, and had been nothing for weeks and weeks but milk from the good old cow and coarse bread without enough salt—no meat, no sugar, no potatoes, no cookies, nothing but bread or grain-soup, and milk.

"But they were very, very thankful for the milk, and they all prayed every night that nothing would happen to the cow.

"Now, all the time they had been talking, Mother, over by the one little window, had been listening while she mended.

"Mending was hard work for Mother, because she had no thread, and when she wanted some, she had to ravel it out of an old piece of sail-cloth she had.

"And when she heard the children sigh and then laugh, two hot tears squeezed themselves past her lashes and rolled over her white cheeks. She knew how little was left even of the coarse flour.

"Mary went on talking. 'So that's why I'm glad it's nearly Christmas,' she said, ''cause of course Santy couldn't carry a lot of stuff like that across the plains; land knows we had trouble enough getting here with what we brought all in one wagon, but if we just keep wishin' and sort of whisper up the chimney, I'm pretty sure he'll do the best he can.'

"Now, it takes several things to make a real Christmas. First of all, you must have a home, a home with lots of love in it. It helps to have a big fireplace with

plenty of logs to burn, and it helps a very great deal to have a family of children with faith in the dear things of life, things like loving and giving and believing, and making the best of everything that comes. It really doesn't matter so very much about anything else.

"So the mother kissed them and tucked her little ones into the queer beds which were just like rough shelves built against the cabin walls, with mattresses of straw or feathers.

"She had another day, anyway, before Christmas, and anything might happen at Christmas-time. One had only to believe.

"After she lay down in her bed, she could hear the wolves howling in the forest and the wind whispering and stirring in the tops of the tall trees, and after a while she fancied she heard a step on the little porch, but no one knocked or called, so she went to sleep.

"And in the morning, which was the morning of Christmas Eve, there on the porch, leaning against the door, was a big, fat sack of potatoes.

"Potatoes don't seem very wonderful to you, but if you hadn't had any for months and had had only that mush and milk and grain-soup which Mary and the other Barton children had, you would know how glad Mrs. Barton was to see them.

"'Not to-day,' she said, when the children danced around and asked her to cook some right away. 'We will save them up for a Christmas treat. I'll make a pat of butter and we'll get some evergreens and trim the house and have a grand Christmas dinner. See if we don't!'

"She laughed as she planned, but she wondered and wondered if the children would be happy without any toys or surprises at all.

"All day she thought about it, and tried, as mothers do, to make a wonder-day of it. But it seemed a hard thing to do with nothing but evergreens and a sack of potatoes to work with.

"She went to her treasure chest, which had in it all that was left of the pretty clothes she used to wear in Ohio. There was her little box of ribbons, faded now, and worn. There were a few lace collars, a little Bible with gilt edges, an old silk dress—nothing which the children hadn't seen often.

"Then, tucked away into a corner, she saw a little roll of colored paper—one pink sheet, and some bright blue, which had come around sugar.

"She took out the paper and looked at it, and all at once she got an idea, a real Christmas Idea.

"Hiding the paper again, she began to sing a little Christmas song, and to have

a soft shine in her eyes where there had been a sorry cloud.

"'It's clearin' up, Mother,' Mary cried, as she came in with an armful of ferns.' (Ferns stay green all winter long in the Oregon Country.) 'I b'lieve we're just goin' to have a bright day to-morrow. It's not rainin' a mite now, and I can see a whole lot of blue sky!'

"'Yes,' Mother agreed happily, 'I think probably we'll have a bright day to-morrow.' And she smiled. She knew what she knew.

"Early, early the children were put to bed, and when Mother was sure the last wriggler was asleep, she drew the calico curtains across the front of the beds (they had only one room, you see, and the beds were hidden behind curtains of bright calico) and set to work.

"First she got a pan of potatoes and set them on the table. Then she got a

knife, a little sharp knife, and then she got the precious colored paper out of the treasure chest, and then she got a little pile of small sticks which she had ready.

"Hour after hour she worked away, growing more and more interested as she worked, and more skillful. And when the candle had burned down till it was only a sputter of flame in the tin candlestick, she lay down beside the baby and went to sleep.

"The sun waked them all up. It hadn't shone for weeks and weeks; it does like that in the Oregon Country; just rains and rains and rains. Then, when the sun comes out, everything looks so green and clean and fresh that you are glad you are alive.

"So the morning sent a bright shaft of yellow light through the little window of the cabin, and it made a broad golden path across the floor to the children's bed,

AND THERE, ON THE FLOOR, IN THE YELLOW SUNSHINE PATH, WAS THE FUNNIEST THING

and shone so brightly on their closed eyes that one by one they began to blink sleepily, then Mary rubbed her eyes and squealed.

"'Merry Christmas!' she cried. 'Merry Christmas! Everybody wake up and see what he brought!'

"And there, on the floor, in the yellow sunshine path, was the funniest thing—a little fat man dressed in a blue paper suit, with long, paper coat-tails, and beside him a tall little lady, dressed in a frilly pink paper dress and hat, and behind them came little boys and girls, and a horse and wagon, and a tiger and the cutest little pigs, and all sorts of things; all made out of potatoes carved with a sharp knife.

"Well, such a day as they had! Such a happy Christmas that the woman who used to be Mary told me about it more than seventy years after it happened."

There was silence for a minute after Aunt Pat had finished. Then seven-year-old Billy said, "Humph! That's what I 'spected. Their mother made all those things."

But little Cousin Sally Lou wouldn't have the story spoiled. "I know," she said, "mothers always help, but who bringed the sack of potatoes on the porch? That was the Christmas Spirit, wasn't it, Aunt Pat?"

And Aunt Pat hugged her up tight and said, "Surely it was, precious lamb, and we'll tell Billy this one, which is just as true as the other, and see what he thinks."

"One big fireplace," began Aunt Pat, "faced into the kitchen, and had an iron crane in it to hang the kettle on. And one big fireplace, with its back to the kitchen, sent dancing shadows across the big sitting-room.

"It was a cozy house; Sam and Sarah thought it was a very grand house because in all the little settlement there was not another house so nice.

"It had three great big rooms downstairs, and two rooms and a sort of attic upstairs. There were real chairs, not just home-made ones, and tables, and a squashy couch with cushions, and a deep armchair covered with a bright chintz like the couch, and chintz curtains were at the windows, and there was a carpet on the living-room floor.

"So, you see for yourself that it really was, for those days and in a new country, a very, very nice house.

"The house stood on the edge of a lake, and there was a little wooden pier built out into the water. And all the water they used in the house had to be dipped up out of the lake in buckets and carried into the house.

"And lots of times Sam and Sarah, little as they were, had to go down and get a bucket of water for mother when she was in a hurry.

"Well, one day when they were down there, Sam said, 'My, but this water's cold! I'll bet it's going to freeze.'

"'Maybe it will,' said Sarah, who was only six years old. 'I'd be sort of glad, wouldn't you? 'Cause then it would snow, and old Santa could come lots easier over the snow.'

"'Santa Claus!' scoffed Sam. 'Hah!

You still believe in all that Christmas stuff. Har!'

"'Yes,' Sarah said stoutly, 'just 'cause he didn't get here last year is no sayin' he won't come this. I guess he hadn't got word we were away out here in the forest. Mother says we're about at the end o' the world.'

"'Well, don't you believe in any Santa Claus, Sarah,' Sam advised; 'there's nothin' to it.'

"They took their little buckets of water and went into the house. And neither of them said anything about Christmas to their mother, but they did a great deal of thinking.

"Not long after that a ship came into the harbor at Steilacoom, and Father was among the lucky settlers who got to the wharf in time to buy some of the goodies which the ship brought in.

"You see, there were no railroads then

across the country, and everything had to come all the way around from New York by water, with no Panama Canal to shorten the trip.

"So even if you had money to buy things, there were very few things to buy. But there was sugar and molasses and spices and all sorts of stuff to make lovely smells from the kitchen, when mother began to bake. And there was much mysterious whispering among the grown-ups.

"On the day before Christmas, Big Sister came home from Olympia where there was a little school for girls, and young Burleigh Pierce came in to share in the holiday feeling of the cozy home, and everybody was jolly and happy.

"That is, everybody was happy except Sarah. She could not forget Sam's words about not believing in Santa Claus, and she couldn't be altogether happy without Santa around bringing surprises for everybody.

"Sarah was only six, and she wanted a dolly and—she wanted to believe in Santa Claus.

"No, Sarah was not happy.

"When night came, the beautiful little mother in the cozy home said, 'Now, you little folks must get to bed early to-night. Santa doesn't come till everybody is asleep.'

"Sarah wanted to ask questions. Her mother had never told her an untrue thing, and she wanted to ask about the heavy feeling in her heart.

"But Sam gave her a knowing wink, and a nudge, and they went upstairs.

"Big Sister took Sarah and tucked her in, and pretty soon she climbed in herself and fell asleep. And though Sarah lay as still as a mouse, she couldn't go to sleep.

"After what seemed a long, long time, something white crept across the floor,

and a voice beside the bed hissed in a boy whisper, 'Sarah! Sarah!'

"'What?' asked Sarah, startled.

"'Don't make a mite o' noise. Crawl out of bed right easy and let's slip into the attic over the kitchen. There's a loose board there, and we can peep right down into the kitchen and I'll bet we'll see Mother and Father filling our stockings?'

"Out Sarah jumped in a jiffy, and the two little figures crept noiselessly across the cold floor.

"Sure enough, there was a loose board, and, sure enough, they could look right down into the kitchen and could see the row of limp stockings hanging along the mantel shelf.

"And, sure enough, there was Father, sitting in his big chair, and there was Mother, just reaching out her hand for a stocking.

"Sam gave Sarah such a big poke that

the loose board rattled, and Mother looked up and said, 'Children! I thought I had sent you to bed. Go straight back to bed and cover up warm. Don't you know Santa can't come till you go to sleep?'

"But, try as they would, they couldn't sleep. And after another long time Sam came to the bed again.

"'Sarah!' he said, 'they think we're asleep. Let's go look again.'

"Down into the kitchen they looked and there hung the stockings, but not limp. They were knobbly and bulgy and running over full. And not a soul was in sight.

"'Humph!' Sam just started to say, when they heard a faint tinkle-tinkle-tinkle on the roof close above their heads; then a scraping, then a footfall, and then, right before their eyes, they saw it happen.

"The fire had burned out, and the hearth was swept clean, and a new fire

was laid ready to light for morning. And down the chimney and out across the clean firewood there came tumbling packages, big ones and little ones, square ones and round ones, hard ones and soft ones, all sorts of packages, tumbling down the chimney.

"Then the bells tinkled and tinkled fainter and more faint, and everything was still again.

"Sarah gave a long, happy sigh, and went softly scampering back to bed. Sam scratched his head and more slowly went to his bed.

"Mother called them in the morning, but they were already nearly dressed. And never, never will they forget the toys and the dollie and caps and stockings and merino dress and other treasures which these packages contained, though Sarah was nearly seventy-five when she told me about it."

"Humph!" said Billy, but the "humph!" had a different sound from his first one. There was little scorn left in the word.

"Who was it on the roof?" Billy asked, after a little pause.

"How should I know?" laughed Aunt Pat; "who would come over the roof on Christmas Eve with a jingle of bells and a pack of Christmas bundles?"

CHRISTMAS SHOES

It was the most curious thing. No matter where it was that you mentioned a little grumble, Aunt Pat seemed to hear it.

And she never scolded or looked disapproving, as some people do when they hear such things; she looked just exactly as if she could understand why you weren't satisfied about the thing which caused the grumble. Then, before you realized what she was doing, she would be reminded of a pioneer happening which made you feel like two cents about your own particular disappointment.

That's how she came to tell the shoe story, because Peggy had black skating-shoes for Christmas, when she wanted, hard as ever she could want, to have white ones.

"How old are you, Peggy?" she be-

gan. "Fourteen? That's what I thought, and you have brown shoes for school, and patent leathers for dress-up, and white slippers for dancing, and red kid bedroom slippers, and elkskin boots for hiking—any more?"

Everybody laughed.

"When people crossed the plains in 1847, to the Northwest Country," she went on, just as if she were beginning again, "there was no railroad, and not even a good road for the gray covered wagons to rumble over.

"And it was such a slow way to travel that it took six months to travel as far as we can go now in less than a week.

"People counted so carefully just how much they would need of everything; so much flour for bread, so much coffee and tea and sugar, and bacon and beans and dried apples, so many dresses and coats and bonnets, and so many shoes,

for not one thing must be taken which could possibly be done without, because it was two thousand miles that the oxen had to pull the heavy wagons before they could reach the coast.

"Sometimes they counted wisely and had things enough to last all the way across, and for the winter after they reached the coast, and sometimes they counted not enough. Then things were very hard.

"Maryanna's mother, of course, knew no more about planning for such a trip than your mother or mine, and she didn't realize that even after they reached the new home in the forest there would be nowhere at all to buy things. How could she even imagine such a thing?

"Another thing that neither she nor Maryanna could possibly know was that Maryanna would find it easier and pleasanter to walk over most of those slow,

dusty miles than to be jounced along in the bumpy, stuffy, covered wagon which had no springs.

"When she walked, Maryanna could join the crowd of young people like herself, and they could all keep out of the dust somewhat by walking through the woods, when the trail led through woodsy places, and it was a great deal more fun.

"But walking two thousand miles, or even one thousand miles, is hard on shoes. And by the time she reached the coast, Maryanna's last pair of shoes went all to pieces, so that nobody could mend them.

"Well, it was October, and the whole family had to work with all its might to get a house built before winter came.

"Father felled the trees with the help of friendly Indians, and Mother and every child except Baby Jim cleared away the low brush and the salmon-berry vines, and little alder trees and the great ferns as high

as their heads, to make a place to build it in.

"And all the time, poor Maryanna had to work with rags around her feet to keep them from getting sore.

"Then, after a little, the rags wore out, and there were not even rags to spare to cover Maryanna's feet.

"They got the house finished, and everybody settled down and began to live happily except Maryanna. More and more, as time went on, she was ashamed of her bare feet.

"She would look this way and that, when she opened the door, to see if anybody was coming, though there were no near neighbors except the squirrels and deer and chipmunks.

"But sometimes, along the trail, some adventurer would come with his pack, or some settler from several miles away, and she thought it was a cruel shame that a

girl past fourteen years old, with her skirts down to her slim ankles, should have to go barefooted.

"The place that oftenest tempted her from her hiding-place in the cabin was a narrow trail which led down to a beautiful brook.

"Waxy white snow berries grew in the woods along the trail, and great bunches of Oregon grapes which looked like holly leaves made into a fern, and bushes of salal with shiny leaves, and such wonderful fairylike mosses such as you never saw unless you have walked a trail in the Northwest woods.

"This was a deer trail, and Maryanna felt that nobody was ever likely to see her there.

"Sometimes, when she saw her face in a still pool of the brook, which was like a mirror, she looked and looked and looked, for it was a very lovely face, with

heavy red brown curls that fell about it, and lovely red brown eyes, and when she smiled there was a deep dimple in her left cheek.

"But she rarely smiled now because she was so ashamed and uncomfortable about her bare feet.

"Now, not very far away from the home of Maryanna, a lonely bachelor had taken up a claim; that is, he had begun clearing the land which the Government had given him. (The Government gave that Northwest Country away in tracts of one hundred and sixty acres each, to any man who was willing to clear a part of it and live on it. They called it 'donation claims.')

"And it just happened that before Maryanna had come to live in the forest, he, too, had found the leafy deer trail, and that he, too, thought it the most beautiful walk in the woods.

"So one day they met on the narrow trail, and the girl was so embarrassed that she dropped her head so that her curls nearly hid her face, and she tried to cover her bare feet with the fullness of her long skirts.

"She knew the man, and she knew that her parents liked and trusted him; and he, poor fellow, couldn't imagine why, when he had passed her, she went flying up the path as if the seven fiends were following her.

"This thing happened several times. Then the young man smiled to himself, for he had guessed the reason.

"So the next time he met her he said, 'Maryanna, stop a minute.'

"And, startled, she stopped and waited for what he would say.

"And because he was but little more than a boy, and didn't know how to do the thing in a diplomatic way, he said, 'Hold

out your foot, Maryanna; I want to measure it.'

"Hold out her foot, indeed!

"Maryanna caught her breath in a long, gasping sob, and cried, 'Oh! You horrid, *cruel* man!' And ran like a wild thing back to her home.

"The young man scratched his head, and wondered what he could have done to make her angry; then he looked after the flying figure, then up at the trees, whose branches met across the trail, then down at the muddy ground.

"Then he did a funny thing. He grinned, and, kneeling down, he took a tape measure from his pocket and very carefully measured the print of Maryanna's little foot, where she had stamped it in the soft wet earth when she was so angry.

"Late that night, after Maryanna was asleep, he went to the cabin door and told her mother all about it.

"'She didn't understand,' he said. 'She thought I was poking fun at her little bare feet. Now I've got the measure, and I'm going to make her a pair of shoes for Christmas. I'll bring them to the door Christmas Eve, and you can knit her some stockings and have them all ready for her Christmas morning.'

"They were doeskin shoes, a little like the shoes you wear for hiking, only—oh, so soft and fine! They had laces of deer thongs, and they came well up over the slender calves of her legs.

"Strangely enough, she never guessed where her mother got them. It was Christmas and things happen on Christmas. And the next time she met the bachelor she looked him straight in the eye, lifted her full skirts ever so little, and said, 'How-do-you-do,' demurely, and tripped blithely on her way."

A CAPTIVE CHRISTMAS

"Oh, Billy! *Billy!*" cried Billy's mother a few days after Christmas. "Are you into those chocolates again?" And she said *again* as if she might have been having trouble about it before.

"Well, Mother," Billy mumbled, with his mouth so full he could hardly speak, "this is only six I've eaten this morning, and — and I didn't think you'd care. There's such a lot of 'em."

Mother tried once more to explain to Billy that she didn't put a limit on his appetite for the sake of saving candy, and when Aunt Pat came in she said, "I don't know what to *do* with him. He's just a little pig about it, and it always upsets his stomach."

Aunt Pat laughed, and said: "Pretty good stuff, Billikins. I like it myself, but

there really is such a thing as eating too much of even good things.

"I know a story about an old Indian who found that out. It's not a bit a pretty story, because it's part of a time when the Indians were on the war-path.

"It was a terrible time, too dreadful to talk about at Christmas. Dr. Whitman and his beautiful wife were killed, and the savages had killed or taken captive all the little settlement about their mission—all the orphan children and the widows and the young people of the Whitman school (they had started a little boarding-school by that time), and it was from one of the little girls in that school that I got the story.

"It was winter, the winter of 1848, and the captive women and children were huddled in a corner of the hut where the Indians held them prisoners, talking in low tones.

"'Have you heard the news?' one asked. 'Is there then no word yet from the fort? I have hoped and hoped that by Christmas we should have help.'

"'No,' another answered, 'no word comes, though they must by now have heard of the massacre. If it were not for old Beardy, I think we should all by now have been murdered. Strange how his friendliness never fails in the midst of all the cruelty and hate that is about us.'

"The days dragged by. December was unwinding its magic days, and Christmas was drawing near.

"Christmas, in a log hut, crowded close with women and children who expected death at any moment!

"Christmas, with howling, painted savages surrounding the hut, and food growing poorer and scarcer day by day!

"Christmas, with children in the house and not a thing to mark the day!

"'Wait!' one mother said. 'Yesterday I found some sacks hidden in the loft. Probably the Indians do not know what it is. There are two sacks of dried peaches, there is a little flour, a little spice, and sugar. I have a plan.

"'We may go hungry before help comes, but for Christmas Day we shall feast. We will take those peaches and make pies and pies and pies—cunning little saucer ones, and big round ones, and the whole place will smell different and the day will seem different, and—we shall have something to do.'

"So, on Christmas morning they set to work, and everybody helped.

"And, indeed, the smells which came out of the oven door were Christmasy smells because of the sugar and spice. They were such very Christmasy and different and delicious smells that they crept through the chinks of the log house, and

out across the yard and reached the nose of old Beardy, the Indian who was kind.

"'Humph!' said Beardy, lifting his flat nose. 'Humph!' And he folded his blanket across his broad chest and stalked into the house.

"He saw the long row of pies all ready for the feast, and his black eyes shone greedily.

"'Give Beardy my pie,' one little girl whispered. 'I'll give it to him for Christmas, 'cause he's so good to us.'

"But one pie didn't satisfy Beardy. He went down the row, stuffing them into his mouth, and swallowing them with pleased grunts, much like the sound a pig makes in a trough.

"When he had had all he could hold, there was but a sliver of a piece left for each of the captives, but they didn't mind because they were so grateful to the old Indian.

"Somehow it did seem like Christmas, and they sat in a circle and sang the old carols, and as twilight fell they were happier than they had been since the awful thing happened.

"Then, right out of the stillness about them, they heard a bloodcurdling yell, followed by more yells from a score of brown throats. There came a pounding at the door, and two men entered, bearing old Beardy between them.

"Beardy was clutching at his tummy and rolling his eyes and groaning, and saying dreadful things in his own language.

"'I was your friend,' he said. 'I treated you kindly, and now you send out a sweet smell to lure me in. And you poison me. I am dying. For this you shall die! Die! Die! For this thing you have done in return for my kindness.'

"For a minute the white women thought

there was nothing to do. Then one of them went quietly up to the suffering old man and told him of their Christmas plan, and why they had let him eat all their Christmas treat. And, somehow, maybe because it was Christmas night, the old fellow believed.

"And not long after New Year the soldiers came and took all the captives safely to the fort.

"I often think of Beardy," Aunt Pat said softly, "when I see little boys going after Christmas goodies as if their tummies had no right to any consideration."

SALLY LOU rubbed and rubbed her soft little cheek against Aunt Pat's shoulder, while she made slow passes up and down her arm with one soft little hand.

"What is it, kitten?" Aunt Pat asked, having finished what she was saying to Grandmother.

"We were wishin'," she ventured, "that you would have time for a sort of jolly pioneer story before dinner-time. Should you think p'r'aps maybe you might? Just one?"

"Well, now maybe p'r'aps I might," Aunt Pat said, cuddling Sally Lou up in her lap. "Maybe p'r'aps I might even tell you one about three little girls just about as big as you."

"Come on!" Sally Lou shouted, taking no chances on losing her place in Aunt

Pat's lap. "Come on! Quick-as-ever-you-can! She's goin' to."

So the story began —

"Ida and Eva were just about as happy as two little girls could be.

"In the first place, they were both six years old. In the second place, they simply loved to be in the woods, and here they were, *living* in the woods, in a funny log house beside the salt slough, with Father away all day at work, and Mother thousands of miles away back at their old home in Indiana waiting for the baby to get big enough to bring out to the coast. And waiting till the big white house could be sold.

"And only Aunt Sadie, dear, young Aunt Sadie, who always understood about them, to make them mind.

"And, in the third place, if they went anywhere at all, they had to go on the salt sloughs. And if they went on the

sloughs, they just pulled their little light canoe out, slid it to the top of the bank, got in, gave it a shove with a paddle, and ker-splash! they slid down the slippery mud bank into the water, for all the world like a chute-the-chutes.

"Every day was brimful of adventures. They saw deer leaping through the woods; they saw a mother bear with her cub, eating salmon berries; saw strange fish and seaweeds.

"And lots and lots of Indians with flat faces and long black hair, and bright blankets about them instead of clothes, came to their door.

"All through the spring and summer they were just as happy as they could be.

"Then, along in the fall, the rains began, and thick fogs drifted in from the sea. And Thanksgiving was pretty lonesome, and the twins began to wonder how-ever

they could have Christmas out in a funny country that was all salt marsh and salt sloughs and deep, deep forests.

"Aunt Sadie wondered, too. She wondered a good deal.

"And, though they all wondered about it and talked about it, nobody seemed to think of a single thing that could be done about it.

"But if you will notice, things very often come out beautifully when it seems as if there is not a chance in the world that they can.

"Right at the time when Eva and Ida and Aunt Sadie were lonesomely talking about Christmas, somebody else was talking, too.

"About three or four miles away from their home, on the bank of another and much larger slough, was the home of Libby Calhoun.

"Often and often the twins had gone in

their canoe to see Libby, and play with her. So Libby's mother knew all about them and about their mother two thousand miles away, and about the rain and everything.

"The Calhouns had lived longer in the Northwest Country than the twins. So they had a better, bigger house and they knew of more ways to get things than the twins' father, because, you see, he had never spent a winter in the wilds of a new country before.

"So Libby's little mother was thinking, 'I wonder what Miss Sadie and Mr. Wallace are going to do about making Christmas for the twins. I wonder—I wonder if we couldn't cut a little fir tree, and make a Christmas tree for all of them. I believe I could. I could string popcorn and cranberries and I could bake cookie-men and make molasses candy. I believe I could do it.'

"Now, this was a good many years after the Christmas when Mrs. Barton made toys out of the potatoes, so there were a few little towns up and down the Sound to which ships came with cargoes of supplies for the settlers. That's how Mrs. Calhoun had molasses, and things to make cookies and had corn to pop.

"The nearest town to the homes of the twins and Libby was Seattle, and it was a little mill town with only a few stores, and not very many of the things which children like for Christmas.

"But when the two fathers heard about the tree, they got a jolly sort of Christmasy feeling and they, too, began to wonder.

"'Seems as if it wouldn't be much of a Christmas tree with no toys on it,' said one father.

"'That's what I was thinking,' said the other. 'I wonder—do you suppose we

could make it down to Seattle and back by Christmas?'

"As people travel now the distance between Swinamish flats and Seattle isn't great. It takes only a few hours to go either by steamer or by the paved road.

"But when the twins were little, there was no road at all, and no steamers except about once a month.

"So the two fathers got an Indian to take them all the way in, in his canoe. And it took them three whole days to make the trip, so that it was Christmas Eve when they reached the Calhoun home.

"Then such a baking and brewing, such a hiding of packages, such a lot of whispering among the grown folks when they got together, and at last starting-time came.

"Aunt Sadie got things together and Father put out the fire. They all went

down the path to the place where the canoe was tied up. The twins climbed in and the tide swished the water up nice and high, and they were off for their house party.

"It was five o'clock when they reached Libby's house, and nearly dark, but the three little girls were as far from thinking of bedtime as though it had been early dawn. Who could be sleepy with the air full of Christmas smells and Christmas mystery?

"Downstairs the little fir tree was fastened firmly to its standard, and was probably about the proudest little tree from the forest.

"Wasn't it the very first one to be chosen for a Christmas tree in all the country around? Its brothers had all been used for firewood, its tall ancestors had been made into totem poles and canoes, and posts for potlatch houses, but no

other little tender green tree in all the region had ever been chosen for the center of a house party.

"'Aunt Sadie!' called Ida, 'aren't you ever coming up?'

"'Pretty soon, dear,' came Aunt Sadie's voice, then more whispering and low tones and paper rustling.

"'Ida,' whispered Eva, 'are they making a Christmas tree? Don't you wish and wish and wish we could go down there and watch?' Then, 'Aunt Sadie!' she called, 'aren't you ever coming up to bed?'

"'Pretty soon, dear,' Aunt Sadie called again, and still the work went on.

"Well, finally the house was all still, still as a house is only on Christmas Eve, with a kind of waiting hush as if the house and everything in it were alive this one night in the year, and ready to shout a Merry Christmas at the first peep of dawn.

"Now, Libby was a whole year younger than the twins, which made her a very little girl, and when she came out into the presence of that tree, all dressed up in its popcorn garlands and its red apples and everything, she just had to have something to hold on to, to keep her from going straight up in the air with happiness and surprise, so she caught hold of her father's coat and danced up and down, crying, 'Oh, Papa! Oh, Papa! Oh, Papa!'—just like that.

"She couldn't think of another thing to say."

THE HOUSE OF SIX CHIMNEYS

"This house is adorable!" Peggy exclaimed for the dozenth time.

"So you have remarked," Ned answered cuttingly. Ned was fourteen as well as Peggy, and he had been very snippy about what he called her "girl's gush."

"Well, it *is*." Peggy held her ground. "It's the most adorable house I ever saw, and I can't tell whether it's because of the Christmas greens and the old furniture or whether it's just because of these *gorgeous* open fires going all the time."

Ned was just about to say something else cutting, when Aunt Pat came in with

"That reminds me, children; did I tell you about the house on Chambers Prairie that had twice as many open fires as this one? Yes, six big open fireplaces, and it

was one of the very early pioneer homes, too."

"Tell it, tell it!" the children chorused.

So Aunt Pat told the story of The House of Six Chimneys:

"Before the fire, four little girls were sitting in four sturdy little chairs.

"The room was warm and bright, and the burning logs sent up dancing flames and showers of sparks.

"Outside the snow fell. It had been falling for most of two days, and as far as they could see the wide prairie was changed from green to white.

"That made the world seem strange to the four little girls, for as long as they could remember the prairie had been green. For snow came rarely in the Northwest Country.

"Presently Addie got up and went to the window. For miles and miles there was nothing to see but the little groves

of oak or fir trees all capped with the strange whiteness of the snow.

"And the long stretches of open snow-covered ground. Not a house or a building of any kind was in sight.

"The snow fell softly, steadily.

"Addie looked awhile, and went back to the fire. The house was strange, too. Nothing seemed real.

"Father came into the room every little while, spoke gently to them and went out again, with a worried, troubled look on his face.

"At noon the Indian woman in the kitchen gave them their luncheon and told them to be very quiet, for their mother was very, very ill.

"Tiptoeing back to the fire again, they all sat down in a little scared row.

"'Addie,' whispered Ella, 'aren't we thust awfully lonesome for Mamma?'

"'Yes,' Addie whispered back; 'come

here and I'll rock you, and tell you a story.'

"Addie's lap wasn't very big; nine-years-old isn't such a very much bigger than four-years-old, you know, but Ella cuddled down and felt better.

"'To-morrow's Christmas, isn't it?' she said. 'Tell me a Santa Claus story. Do you 'spect he'll come to our house even when Mamma is sick?'

"'Of course he will,' Addie said. 'This snow is just what he likes for his reindeer and sleigh; and, besides, he came when we had only four chimneys to our house, and now there are six, all big.

"'I expect he could see this big a house for miles and miles. And I expect when he sees all those chimneys stickin' up in the air, he'll just come ridin' up over the roof lickety-cut to see if maybe there aren't about a dozen children in this house.'

"Father came into the room, and shook

his head when they asked him if Mother felt better.

"It was such a strange-feeling day, such a strange-feeling house. Sue got a funny lump in her throat which would not swallow.

"'Well!' she said, blinking away the tears which had begun to trickle down her nose, 'I'm going to finish those stockings I was knitting. I guess it'll be better to have brand span new ones to hang up.'

"Sue was eleven, and her plans were most always good. So, while she knitted away on the last rows of her new stockings, the other little girls went to find theirs.

"'Children,' Father said, when he saw what they were about, 'come here,' and he gathered them into his strong arms.

"He cleared his throat and stroked their curls, and cleared his throat again and looked as if he didn't quite know how to begin.

"'What is it, Father?' Addie helped him.

"'Why,' he said, 'you know this snow is very unusual. We aren't used to it in this country.' His voice sounded sort of jerky and queer. 'And I've just been thinking. I've been thinking—that—that maybe Santa Claus wouldn't be able to find us this year.

"'You see, it isn't as if we lived near the fort or near the place where the ships come in. We are so far out here. I'm really afraid he won't find us.'

"'Don't you worry, Father,' Addie said, squeezing him around the neck and rubbing her pink cheek up close to his pale face. 'We've been talkin' about it already, and we've decided that surely he can see all these chimneys from away and away far off. So don't you worry. He'll come. We just know he will.'

"'I wouldn't expect him this year,'

Father said with a sigh as he went back to Mother's room.

"Four solemn little faces looked into the fire for a while. Then Sue said, 'Well, anyway, we can hang up our stockings, and then if Santa comes he'll know we were expecting him. And if he doesn't come, why, we can just take 'em down again.'

"Outside the snow fell softly, steadily; the white light of it shone through the windows into the quiet room. The fire had burned low; the children were all gone to their beds.

"Above the dying fire hung four limp little stockings, waiting.

"Father passed a tired hand across his brow and said, 'I wish I could have made them see how there cannot be any Christmas with the snow cutting us off from supplies, and their mother sick.'

"Sometime during the night the snow

ceased to fall, and all the world was one white glitter when the sun rose on Christmas morning.

"Fires flamed and crackled in six big chimneys when the four little girls opened their eyes, and somehow the world seemed a wonderful place to wake up in.

"'It's Christmas!' cried Sue, forgetting for a moment that Mother was not there. Then, more softly, 'It's Christmas. Le's all run downstairs before we dress and see if Santa came.'

"Down they went, trailing their white nighties and looking like a picture with their dark eyes and tumbled curls.

"The stockings looked very limp and very thin, but every little hand reached expectantly down, down to the very toe to make sure.

"And, sure enough, there it was, right in the tip of the toe of each stocking—a little, square blue package.

"Not a sound did they make, but with excited faces they tore away the blue paper, and when Father came in from Mother's room, four rapturous faces were lifted to his, and four pink tongues were tasting, tasting, for the thing in the toe of each stocking was a lump of sugar!

"A whole lump for each, and they hadn't had any for months!

"Then they saw that Father's face was shining, too, and that the trouble was all gone from his eyes.

"'He came, Father, look, he came!' they whispered, remembering Mother. 'Does Mother know he came?'

"'Yes,' Father said, 'Mother knows and Mother has a surprise for you in her room, but you must go very softly.'

"Four little white-clad figures leaned over the edge of Mother's bed, and four little mouths made round O's of wonder.

"For, when Mother lifted a corner of

the covers, there beside her lay a real live little Christmas baby, all soft as rose-leaves and as pink.

"'Did you hang yours up, too?' Ella asked, 'and did Santa stuff her into the very tiptoe same as he stuffed our lumps o' sugar in?'

"'She was too precious to stuff in a stocking,' Mother answered. 'Father laid her right here in my arms.'

"Suddenly Addie couldn't stand being quiet any longer, and she just gave one almost-out-loud little squeal, and cried, 'Oh! Isn't it beautiful to be livin'! Merry Christmas, little Christmas baby. I 'spect you'll always be happy 'cause you came on Christmas Day.'"

LILLY AND THE LORD CHRIST'S BIRTHDAY

THE black trunk was nearly ready to lock; on its front side were brass clasps and locks and buckles, and on its two ends were white letters.

Billy was spelling them out. "P–A–T–R–I–C–I–A," he drawled. "What does that spell, Aunt Pat?"

"That's Patricia, Billy-boy," Aunt Pat laughed. "It's the polite way to say 'Pat,' and the other words are Seattle and Washington."

"Are you going there? Is it all in the deep, lonesome forest with Indians?" he asked awesomely.

Aunt Pat laughed again. "Go get the other children before I lock this trunk," she said, "and I'll show you how much my Seattle isn't a deep forest."

Pretty soon they were all pressing close about the pictures, and Aunt Pat was telling them things; but before they were half through with the street pictures and the harbor and the tall buildings, she said, putting her finger on a picture of a building taller than all the rest, "Right here was the home of one of my best-loved pioneers.

"Now, she is a dear little gray-haired lady, but when she lived there, she was a chubby little girl with a regular little-girl heart.

"That was about fifty-eight years ago, and there weren't any tall buildings then, and right down the place that is that street ran a creek which broadened out into a shallow lake in the winter-time.

"The windows of Lilly's home looked out over the little lake at the back of the house, and in front they looked toward a funny sawmill, and there were just a few

other little houses about; no big city at all.

"I'll tell you a story about Lilly:

"It was the night before Christmas and Lilly had had her prayers and was sitting in Mother's lap, toasting her pink toes before the fire.

"The warmth of the fire felt very good, for it was a cold night and they could hear the waves of the bay rolling and roaring up on the beach not far away, and the wind howling in the great trees on the hill.

"Mother was finishing the Christmas story—'So ever since that first Christmas Star shone over the manger, where the Lord Christ baby lay,' she said, 'we have kept his birthday for a day of loving and giving, so He will know that we never forget about how much He loved and gave to us.'

"The door opened, and a gust of icy

wind swept into the room, as Lilly's doctor father entered.

"'Colder than Iceland!' he said, rubbing his hands together before the blaze. 'Shouldn't wonder if everything would be frozen by morning. I certainly hope I can have at least part of the day at home. But—the cold may cause trouble.'

"He threw on more wood, and Mother wrapped Lilly snug and warm in an old shawl and carried her to bed.

"For some time Lilly lay watching a shining star through the window, and thinking.

"'Loving and giving,' she murmured, 'Loving and giving. The Lord Christ's Birthday.' Then she fell asleep.

"It seemed to her that she had barely had time to close her eyes when her brothers came pulling her curls and crying, 'Merry Christmas! Sleepy head, going to sleep all day? Come see the stockings.

We're waiting for you to come so we can all open 'em together.'

"The stockings were quite as wonderful as Christmas stockings should be, and each child counted over his candy to see exactly how much there was.

"Candy was still a treasure to the children in the Northwest Country; it was very hard to get because the ships which came into those far-away ports were laden with more necessary things, and as they were only little ships they hadn't room for such extras as candy and toys.

"But there was enough—five sticks in each stocking, a little handful of candy hearts and three gumdrops. And that was all anybody in the doctor's home could have during the holidays.

"It was not until after things had settled down for the morning with the boys gone out to play and Father doctor off to see some sick people, and Mother dear

busy cooking the Christmas dinner, that Lilly tasted her candy.

"It was a cold, gray day, with a few flakes of snow falling once in a while, and big whitecaps rolling in on the black waves of the bay.

"Inside the warm house it was comfy and sweet, with a smell all made up of evergreens and wood smoke and delightful whiffs which came from the oven door when Mother 'basted' the turkey.

"Lilly stood at the window, contentedly licking a peppermint stick, using all her will power not to crunch into it with her sharp little teeth and take a *big* bite.

"But she wouldn't. She would make it last a long time; even licking it made it shorter much faster than Lilly liked.

"The shallow lake was all frozen over as Father doctor had thought it would be, and as Lilly stood looking at it with her

dolly hugged tight in her arm, she saw an Indian woman coming toward the house.

"The woman's blanket looked thin and worn as the wind whipped it about her and she seemed to have under it only a calico dress.

"Her bare brown feet made black tracks across the light snow on the ice. She shivered as she drew near the house.

"'Mother dear,' called Lilly, 'there's a poor old Klootchman' (that is the Indian word for woman) 'coming across the ice. She looks 'most frozen. Shall I let her in?'

"Lilly's mother sighed. So many 'Klootchmans' came to her door. They begged and stole constantly. More than that, her house was Christmas-sweet, and she knew that if any Klootchman sat by her fire for a time, the house would smell of fish oil and other unpleasant things. They were so smelly!

"So she didn't say yes at once, but thought quickly in her mind that she would give her some food at the door and send her home.

"But Lilly spoke again before Mother dear had time to tell her what she thought.

"'I 'spect we'll just have her come in,' Lilly was saying, 'cause on the Lord Christ's Birthday a person couldn't let a poor old Klootchman be cold. Not if a person had a fire. Shall I tell her to come in?'

"'Hungry,' the Klootchman whined, when she was in the warm room and squatted on the hearth. 'Cold and hungry and poor. Want food. Want white man's food.'

"She spoke in the language of the Indians, but little Lilly and her mother understood.

"'Well, get yourself warm,' the doc-

tor's wife said, 'and I will get you some food in a basket.'

"Out of her Christmas stores she chose good things enough for a dinner, and packed them into a basket. She also gave the woman hot coffee to drink and she saw that her hands trembled as she took the cup.

"'I'll get her some shoes and stockings to keep her warm,' the doctor's wife said, and went to find them.

"Lilly had gone back to her window and the careful licking of her peppermint stick.

"The Indian woman watched her with hungry eyes. 'Good?' she asked. 'You like?'

"'Yes,' Lilly answered. 'Um-m-m-m.'

"'Want taste. See Klootchman think good,' she said.

"For about a minute Lilly thought she was going to say—NO. Then into her

mind—or was it her heart? came the words of Mother dear's story—'Loving and giving for the Lord Christ's sake.'

"'Here,' said Lilly, thrusting her beloved stick into the brown hand, before her courage would fail.

"Snap! Crunch! Smack! in about half a second the whole stick was gone and the smile which spread over the haggard face was like a sunbeam.

"But what she said made Lilly look very serious. Holding out the fingers of one hand, she said, counting them off in a low, sing-song whine, 'One little, two little, three little, four little I have in my hut.' (Meaning that she had four children.)

"'Never, never, never do they taste a thing so good. Give me more, more for my littles.'

"'I wish she wouldn't be so greedy,' the doctor's wife thought, as she came in. 'The child has given her enough.'

"YOU CAN HAVE IT ALL," SHE SAID SOBERLY

"But Lilly was thinking hard. She thought of the turkey in the oven and the three gumdrops and the handful of candy hearts. She thought of her dolly and the gingerbread man, and the fat doughnut soldier, and she thought of the dark, cold dirty hut where those other children lived. Then she thought of the Christmas Child in the manger.

"'You can have it all,' she said soberly, for it was a great gift. 'Tell 'em to lick it. It's more lasting. You take the sticks. I've eaten most of this one, but you take it to 'em, and I'll keep the rest.'

"Off the Klootchman went; no amount of explaining would make her put on the shoes. She wrapped them up in her shawl and tramped back through the snow, barefooted, with the shoes under one arm and the basket under the other.

"Lilly's mother stooped down and hugged her little girl close up, as she

whispered, 'That's the way to make Christmas happy, darling. Loving and giving, giving and loving, remembering the Birthday of the dear little Lord Christ.'"

ON THE WAY TO THE COAST

The good-byes were all said, and Aunt Pat sat among her boxes of candy and magazines which everybody had heaped around her at the last minute, and thought about the long trip ahead of her, and of how much fun it would be if even one of all the nieces or nephews could have taken the trip with her back to her beloved Northwest Country.

From St. Louis to St. Paul, all the miles the railroad ran up the banks of the Mississippi, Aunt Pat was quite alone, and quite alone and a little tired she took her sleeper at St. Paul.

It was almost nine o'clock and there wasn't a sound in the sleeper when she entered. Probably all the people in it had got on in Chicago, she thought.

The train pulled out of the St. Paul

station and began its long run across the country to the West Coast.

Aunt Pat was tired, and it took her only a few minutes to slip off her suit and slip on her soft, silk Pullman robe, and settle down into her berth.

Chugity-chug, chugity-chug, chugity-chug! sounded the engine, and she was just beginning to think it made a very nice, sleepy song, when something made her sit up very suddenly and listen.

It was only a soft little sound, but oh! it was so lonesome; just a little "sniff! sniff! sniff!" with a gulp between. And Aunt Pat was sure the minute she heard it that it was no grown-up sniffing.

Very cautiously she parted the curtains and peeped across the narrow aisle, and up it, and down it, but the curtains hung like a flat green wall; not one wiggled even a little to let her know where the crying came from.

Aunt Pat drew her head back.

The soft crying didn't stop.

Aunt Pat said, "I can't stand this," and she pressed the little button which rang the porter's bell.

"Porter," she said, "there's a child crying and—nobody seems to be paying any attention to it. I wonder if you could find out about it. It may be sick."

Then both Aunt Pat and the porter jumped, for a pair of little feet came down on the porter's woolly head and a choky little voice said, "It was me. I'm not sick, but I'm up here on the top shelf and I'm 'fraid, and—and I'm so lonesome for my daddy."

Of course the porter lifted the little girl down, and pretty soon Aunt Pat knew all about how long Mother dear had been sick and how Daddy had put Kitsie to bed every night, and how the doctor had said that if Mother dear ever got well,

Daddy must take her south, and there wasn't enough money for all of them, so Kitsie was going alone to Seattle, with only a letter written on a strip of linen sewed to her underwaist, to keep her from getting lost.

"We'll just pretend I'm your very own Auntie," Aunt Pat said, "and you'll come down here with me, and I'll tell you a bear story about a little girl not much bigger than you, who lived in Oregon when that country was all wild forests. It isn't like that now. This story happened about sixty-five years ago:

"Once upon a time, there came to the big forest in the Oregon Country, a little family.

"The father was strong and brave and the mother was sweet and brave, and they said, 'We will take our children and teach them to love the big forest and to fear nothing.'

"The father said, 'I will teach the boy to love this new country and he shall have courage and strength and he will fear nothing.'

"And the mother said, 'I will teach the little girl to endure hard things and to use her mind quickly when danger comes and to laugh when things go wrong.'

"Then they smiled at each other, and though the boy, who was only one year old, understood not a word they were saying, and the little girl who was three, understood but little more, their pioneer training began right then and there.

"Now, as I told you, the home they chose, like so many other pioneer homes, was in the big forest, miles and miles away from any city. And the father and mother worked together and built their little house.

"Then the father built a table that would hook up against the wall and be

out of the way when they weren't using it, and a bench out by the door and a few shelves to put things on, and when he had all the big things finished, he sawed and measured and hammered away, and the mother said, 'What-ever are you making now?'

"And what do you think it was? A wee little stout wooden chair for each of the children.

"And the little house looked very much like the house Goldie Locks found when she ran away and found the home of the three bears in the woods. Only in this house there were four of everything instead of three.

"There was the great, huge chair in which the father sat, and the middle-sized chair for the mother, and the wee small chair for the little girl, and another just like it for baby brother, only a bit smaller.

"Then there were the tables—the great,

huge table where they all ate, and the middle-sized table where the mother sewed and worked and the father wrote things and mended leather straps, and the sturdy little wee small table, which the children could carry about as they chose.

"The rainy weather came and went; baby brother learned to walk alone, and the little sister learned to wipe the dishes and brush up the hearth and do many useful things.

"Summer came and while Mother helped Father clear land and cooked and washed and mended for them all, the little folks played about—made friends with squirrels and chipmunks and robins and ground sparrows and were as healthy and happy and as unafraid as any other baby things in all the forest 'round.

"Other winters came and summers followed until little sister was quite tall when Father measured her against the doorpost,

and she said, 'Well, I ought to be tall—I'm eight years old.'

"'Yes,' laughed Father; 'yes, you ought to be tall, but if you don't hurry and grow faster this rascal will catch up with you and he's only five.'

"He measured brother, and, sure enough, he didn't seem to be three inches shorter.

"Well, that summer there seemed to be no help for it—Mother and Father just had to go to town, and they simply couldn't take the children.

"'Pooh!' scoffed little Sister, 'we aren't a teeny, weeny mite afraid to stay by ourselves, are we?'

"And Brother said, 'I—should—say—we—are—not. What could hurt us? I guess we are big enough to keep house for our own selves for one day.' And he puffed out his chest like a pouter pigeon and felt quite large.

"So they all talked it over and a day was set, and one beautiful summer morning, quite early, Mother and Father started off.

"It didn't seem quite so much fun as Brother thought it would be, and in the house things felt queer—not a bit like the feeling it had when Mother was just outside helping Father with the garden or something.

"'I'll tell you what let's do,' said Sister; 'it's lots nicer in the yard. Let's take our table and our chairs and make a tea-party out of our lunch.'

"So they made a cute little playhouse and set out the table and chairs and got the nice luncheon Mother had left for them all covered up with a napkin.

"And all would have been well if there had been no unexpected and terrifying company.

"The party was all ready. Back and

forth, back and forth the children had gone from the house to the little table in the yard, and back again, till it was just as they wanted it.

"They stood off to look at it before they would sit down; it looked so festive out there in the sunshine, and just before they took their seats a noise in the near-by woods caught their attention.

"'O-o-o-o!' gasped the little Sister, and Brother gasped another, 'O-o-o-o!'

"There, shambling toward the tea-party, as fast as her two fat cubs could follow her, came a *great big black bear!*

"Now, a bear is no kind of company for two little bits of children left all alone in the middle of a great big forest.

"And the fact that she had brought her babies to the party didn't make it any more pleasant for little Brother and Sister.

"'Come on, honey,' little Sister whis-

pered. 'Don't you be afraid. We'll climb up in the loft—you go as fast as ever you can go and I'll be along in a minute.'

"The little boy ran as fast as his short legs would carry him and scrambled up the rickety ladder to the loft, while little Sister ran to the hearth, and, snatching up the heavy axe, she followed.

"It was hard climbing for a bit of a girl, with little hands and slender arms, but she didn't falter.

"Looking through the open door she could see the three bears eating up the tea-party and pushing the little chairs about in their clumsy greediness, but she didn't cry; she pressed her lips tight together and climbed.

"'What will we do if she climbs up after us?' said Brother. 'I'll bet you'll just take the axe and knock her in the head, that's what.'

"But little Sister had no notion of hav-

ing the bears come close enough to be knocked in the head.

"Hack! hack! hack!—she swung the axe as hard as her little arms would let her.

"Hack! hack! hack!—she could see the bears licking the dishes and the beady eyes of the mother bear turned toward the open door; then her great body ambled toward it.

"Whack!—Fear gave strength to the little arms and the ladder broke and fell with a clatter to the floor.

"'Woof!' said the bear.

"'Woof, your own self!' said the little boy; 'you'll have to be taller than that before you can reach up here.'

"But it was pretty scary, just the same, to have a great big bear standing just below you on her hind legs, and trying her best to reach you with her great black claws, and the two little faces probably

got very white before the bear finally tired of her efforts, and 'woofing' to her babies, ambled off into the woods.

"The sun had set and the shadows were long and black before the children heard Mother and Father coming back, and probably no other arms ever felt quite so good and safe as theirs when the kiddies were lifted down from the loft and cuddled close."

"I don't know," Kitsie sighed contentedly, nestling close to Aunt Pat. "I 'spect I know how they felt."

THE ADVENTURES OF LITTLE MAY

It was broad daylight when Kitsie waked up. The train was speeding over the wide, snow-covered prairies, and for a minute Kitsie felt very strange and frightened; then she heard Aunt Pat's nice, comfy voice, with a lilt of a laugh in it, saying,

"Oh, you sleepy-head! I'm nearly starved for my breakfast; I thought you never would wake up."

And by the time they had dressed and had breakfast in the diner, and come back to their sleeper, every bit of Kitsie's strange feelings were gone, and she was begging for more stories of the children in the Old Oregon Forest, exactly as Aunt Pat's own nieces did.

So Aunt Pat told her the story of little

May, who told the story her very own self to Aunt Pat in the summer of 1923:

"May was a little girl just six years old, and as full of mischief as a monkey in a peanut stand. She had big brown eyes, and long brown curls, a mouth just made to laugh, and big dimples in her cheeks.

"Her home was a log house in the middle of a clearing which grew bigger every year, as the great fir trees were cut down, and their stumps burned or blown out.

"The house had a chimney built of rubblestone up as high as the mantel shelf, and beyond that it was built of sticks and plastered with mud.

"When the fire got hot, the mud cracked and fell off, and the chimney caught fire so often that nobody got excited about it at all.

"'Get a bucket of water, quick,' the

mother would call out calmly, 'the house is afire.'

"There weren't any other houses near the one in which May lived, but only half a mile away there was the log schoolhouse.

"Most of the homes built by the early settlers were little homes; the trees were so big and grew so close together that it took most of the time and strength of the pioneer fathers to clear them away, and there weren't any carpenters and builders, so every man had to build just a wee house for a shelter for his family, and go on clearing the land so he could get at making a living for them on the new farm.

"So, since almost everybody had only a little house to live in, when they wanted to get together for Fourth of July or Christmas or anything, they all went to the schoolhouse; all the mothers and fa-

thers and children from miles and miles around.

"And because May's home was the nearest one to the schoolhouse, the mothers would come in their wagons or on horseback, and they would leave all the little folks to play with May and her sister, who was nine years old.

"One day, not long before Christmas, some of the mothers came and said to May's mother, 'Come on and let's go to the schoolhouse and decorate for the celebration. The children will be happy here all day, and when the time comes for the celebration, we'll be ready.'

"But with May for a leader, the children didn't wait for date nor day nor hour; the 'celebration' began when the last mother disappeared down the schoolhouse road.

"'Let's go to the barn and play!' May cried as soon as they were gone. 'Le's

slide down the haymows; they're slick as slick.'

"Now, there were two of these haymows. One, higher than the other, and May's idea was to 'chute-the-chutes' from one to the other, and make a grand landing on the barn floor.

"Up they climbed like monkeys, to the top of the highest pile. 'I'll go first and show you how,' May volunteered; she, being all of six years old, was a very good guide.

"It was 'slick' all right; down she went like a flash, but instead of making the grand finish as planned, the watchers heard a little gasp, and where there had been a gay little girl, there was only an ugly-looking hole.

"May had not made the leap; instead, she was far down in the smothery narrow space between the two great mows of hay.

"A shriek rose from the huddle of frightened children who had seen May disappear. 'What'll we do? She'll die! She'll smother! She's down there under all that hay!'

"'Listen up there!' came a muffled voice from the hay. 'Stop crying and listen. I can't get out myself, but I guess you can get me out, can't you?'

"Then followed wild schemes of rescue, and finally with heavy pitchforks in small, trembling hands, they began to dig, terror-stricken lest she die before they could get her out.

"But all the suffering was done by the other children. May was just a little bit uneasy, but she wouldn't have changed places with them for the world; she could hear them half-crying as they worked and talked.

"Every once in a while one of them would call down to her to see if she were

still alive; and sometimes she would make her voice very faint and wobbly, just to keep them thinking of how dreadful it was to be down there, 'most buried.

"They were tired when they finally got her out, and a little frightened over what might have happened."

Aunt Pat went on with another of little May's adventures:

"She loved her dolls, much better than most little girls love dolls now.

"Such funny things they were, too; only two or three, one made out of white cambric with a face painted on it with elderberry juice and black ink, another whittled out of wood, and just one really, truly little doll, with a wax face and real hair.

"Out in the woodshed May had a play-house; there were broken bits of china for doll dishes, little acorn cups for tea-

cups; there was a little wooden box with scraps of goods and bits of ribbons ready to sew into doll clothes, and there was a bed for her dollies, made up on a board, with a wee quilt which May had pieced with her own hands.

"Back of the woodshed, and down by the creek, was a camp of Indians, real Indians, who had bows and arrows and who wore blankets instead of clothes, and little Indian children who didn't even wear blankets.

"May's mother was very patient and kind with the Indians, but May couldn't like them. 'Dirty, smelly things,' she would say. 'Always begging for something, and always stealing something. I wish there *weren't* any Indians.'

"There was one little boy she most especially disliked. He was taller than she, and his flat, brown forehead was almost always wrinkled with a frown, and

his big, black eyes just glinted at her from under heavy lids.

"She could not bear him.

"Time after time she went into the playhouse and found something missing —a piece of calico she had saved for a doll dress, or a bit of the blue vase that was broken, or some other treasure.

"'Mamma,' she said, 'some of these Indians are taking things out o' my playhouse, and I won't have it.'

"'Oh, maybe not,' Mother answered. 'Maybe you put them somewhere else and forgot. You mustn't accuse any one of stealing unless you are sure.'

"May was sure enough. She kept on missing things and getting more angry about it, till one day she got to the woodshed door just in time to see the little boy she had suspected walking off with her best-loved doll.

"'Put that doll back!' she screamed.

'You put my dollie back! And don't you ever touch my dollies, not ever!'

"He gave her an ugly, grown-up sort of look of hatred and stubbornness and walked on, carrying the doll by the arm.

"All the anger which had been growing in that little girl during the week boiled over at once, when she saw him with her doll, that precious baby doll, in his dirty hand, and she picked up a stick of wood and flung it with all her might, straight at him!

"She didn't think whether it would really hit him or not, but she did hit him, right in the back, and he went down as if he had been shot.

"Poor little May was almost scared to death; she thought she had killed him; he lay so still and didn't say a word, but her thought was still on her baby, and she ran cautiously up and started to pick her up.

"But the little Indian wasn't killed; as soon as he felt the tug at the doll, he gave a regular Indian war-whoop, and from every hut Indian mothers came running, while May's mother hurried out from the house.

"'Well, anyway, he can't have my baby dollie, and I guess he isn't much hurted if he can yell like that!' May said, as she walked off, leaving her mother to make things right with the Indians."

THE STORY OF THE WOOD-CHOPPER

"Now, suppose," said Aunt Pat, "we tell this story as if it were a fairy story. Wouldn't you like that?"

"I'd love it!" Kitsie agreed.

"You must promise to remember," she urged, "that it happened in the Oregon Country just as I'm telling you.

"Once upon a time," she began, "there lived in the great forest of Oregon a wood-chopper.

"The man was old and poor and very, very lonely.

"When he had finished his work each day, he trudged off to his little hut in the woods.

"He would walk down the crooked street which was no better than a forest trail, and when he saw children playing

about the doors of the little homes, the log cabins, or houses built of cedar boards, where other settlers dwelt in the new country, his heart would ache for loneliness.

"Now, when the Oregon Country was beginning to be settled up by white people, one of the very hard things to manage was getting folks and messages and things safely from one place to another; for there were no roads through the great forest, and no trucks and automobiles if there had been roads, few wagons, and only canoes or rafts or clumsy flat-bottomed little rowboats to use on the rivers. So a man a few miles away was really very, very far away.

"'We shall have to build a railroad,' the people said, 'so that we shall be able to reach each other and so that things which grow on our new farms can be taken away for selling in the large settlements and villages.'

"After the railroad was finished, a certain minister-man came to live in the little new town of Sutherlin, Oregon, who said, 'We need to get together and have a big meeting. We will send out word to all the people up and down the railroad, and we will get together and have a big, big meeting, in the church.'

"So word went out and all the people came, and when the train stopped at the little station and all the people had got off, last of all there stepped down a little old woman with snow-white hair.

"Now trains are such common things that you scarcely look at one when it passes. But trains fifty years ago were wonder-things in Oregon, and when it was time for the noisy little engine, with its combination train of freight cars, passenger coach, and caboose, to puff into a station, everybody in town who wasn't too busy was down at the little wooden station to see it.

"The woodchopper was there, and he saw the train come in, and he saw people getting off by twos and threes, and he saw people greeting their friends, and last of all he saw the lone little old woman climb down all by herself, for the little old woman was old and poor like the woodchopper.

"When he went back to his hut to get his lonely supper before the meeting, he thought much about the little old woman.

"Every day, while the meetings lasted at the little church, the woodchopper saw Nancy (that was the little old woman's name), and every day he spoke to her, and when the meetings were over and Nancy didn't come on the train, he was more lonely than ever.

"One day he got a pen and some paper and ink and sat down and wrote Nancy a letter.

"'You are lonesome in your hut in the

woods,' he wrote, 'and I am lonesome here in mine. Your children are all married and gone and I have no children. Why don't you come and live here with me and be my wife, and then neither of us will be lonesome any more?'

"But Nancy wrote back, 'Next month is Thanksgiving time, so I cannot come, for I have chickens in my yard and one rooster I have fattened and tended, so that I may have a feast for my Thanksgiving dinner.'

"'That,' wrote back the woodchopper, 'matters not at all, for I, too, would like a feast for Thanksgiving, and you can come to my hut and bring your chickens and your rooster and we will feast together.'

"So the woodchopper came to a man who he thought was a very rich man, and said, 'I wrote a letter to Nancy; I want to marry her, but she says she can't come

because she has a rooster for Thanksgiving.'"

"Did the man be very rich?" Kitsie interrupted the story-teller.

"He was much richer than the woodchopper or poor old Nancy," Aunt Pat answered, "and he was the man to whom people always went in any trouble.

"'Well, well!' the man said to the woodchopper, when the old man told him he had asked Nancy to marry him. 'Have you money enough to marry and take care of a wife?'

"'I have two dollars to buy a license and one dollar to pay the minister,' the old woodchopper replied, 'and after that I have my two hands to work with and we shall be no poorer than we were living in two huts instead of one.'

"At that the man laughed, and, clapping the woodchopper on the shoulder, he said, 'And that isn't such poor reason-

ing, either. You go and get Nancy and I will make ready for a wedding.'

"Now all the people knew the old woodchopper, and when they heard that he was going to get a wife, they said, 'But he is very, very poor and they will starve!'

"'Not at all,' said the man. 'The woodchopper has left his hut in the forest to go and get his wife. They are to come in on the train the day before Thanksgiving and in the mean time we will get ready for the wedding.'

"First the man told the people he would give them the use of the town hall for the wedding. Then he got together the men who had musical instruments and told them about the wedding and they agreed to make themselves into a band to furnish the music for the wedding. And last of all he gave a bell to a young lad and to him he said, 'Go up and down the streets of our village and ring this bell, and when

the people ask, "For what reason do you ring the bell?" you shall say, "I ring that you may know that the woodchopper is to be married at the town hall, the band will play, and all who wish may come if only they bring with them a quarter to swell the sum of the woodchopper's money, for you know that he is very, very poor."' "

"Was it a white bell, all made of flowers that the boy carried?" Kitsie asked eagerly. "When Miss Margaret was married, a big white bell was hanging right over her head."

"No," Aunt Pat answered, "the bell the lad rang for that early-day wedding was a common dinner-bell, such as farmers use to let the hands know when to come in from work.

"So," she continued, "the people laughed and told each other what a funny wedding it was like to be, but each one planned in his heart to go.

"The day before Thanksgiving came; the people gathered at the station to see the train come in and to welcome the little old woman who would no longer be alone.

"And when she clambered down from the steps of the car, she looked like a walking henhouse, for in baskets and little slatted boxes, in bags and in sacks, she brought her chickens with her; her chickens and the fat rooster who was to make for her and the poor woodchopper a Thanksgiving feast.

"After much squawking and fluttering and stumbling and snatching at falling fowls, the two old people got the chickens to the woodchopper's hut, returned to the waiting people at the town hall, and were married.

"The band played and the people smiled, and when the gift of so many silver quarters was handed to the wood-

chopper, he thought he had reached the end of his troubles.

"But—!

"Early in the cold gray dawn of the next morning there came a timid knocking at the door of the rich man's house.

"'What is it?' he called out. 'Who's there and what is your errand at this time of night, when honest folks are still in their beds?'

"'It is only I,' wailed the poor woodchopper. 'Please, sir, have you seen Nancy's fat rooster? He got loose and I dare not return to my hut till I get him, dead or alive, for it was to have made a feast for Nancy.'

"Well, such a scurrying and such a laughing among the people and such a squawking of the rooster when he was caught. But they got him at last, the feast was cooked, and the woodchopper and the little old woman lived happily ever after."

KITSIE had Aunt Pat's railroad map, tracing with her finger the outline of the State of Washington.

But it wasn't only her finger that was busy; she kept asking questions about the towns, and the roads, and the rivers, and the counties, till Aunt Pat caught her up in her lap with a laugh, and said, "You blessed little question box, cuddle down here and stop asking questions and I will tell you a story about that very corner, or almost the corner—this county," she said, putting a finger on one far up to the northwest.

"S–K–A–G–I–T," spelled Kitsie, hanging on to the map. "That one?"

"Yes, a story about a little girl just about as big as you, who lived in Skagit County, when there were hardly any roads at all."

Then she told Kitsie about the story of Libby and the twins, and about the salt sloughs and the going places in canoes.

"Could little Libby go all by herself in her little boat; all quite alone, without *anybody* to keep care of her?" she asked.

"All by herself," Aunt Pat answered, "and she wasn't any more afraid of going out on the water in her little boat than you are afraid to walk on a pavement.

"There is a river up there with that same Indian name, the Skagit River, and almost every spring, when the snow melts on the mountains and the warm rains fall, the water comes tumbling and boiling down all the little mountain streams, pours itself into the river, and the river keeps running higher and higher, till it runs clear over the banks, and spreads itself out over all the farms along its way; and it's a flood.

"Well, the spring that Libby was six years old, the river was on a regular rampage and all the men who were making themselves farms on the Swinamish Flats (that's where Libby lived) were worried.

"And no wonder they felt anxious, for right there is where the Skagit empties itself into the salt waters of Puget Sound, and what with the tides coming and going in the sloughs and the river rising higher and higher, it just looked as if maybe it was going to be a regular flood like Noah's flood in the Bible.

"But Libby didn't worry; she liked watching it, and she spent most of her time doing that very thing.

"One day the big scow came up to get the bags of grain which her father had stored away, and Libby stood on the shore, sometimes watching the men as they walked across the narrow plank from

the granary to the scow with the heavy sacks on their shoulders, and sometimes watching the unusual eddies and swirls and twists in the water, and the big pieces of driftwood which swept past.

"Presently the tide began to go out, and the men hurried so as to finish. But they didn't hurry fast enough, and they had pushed off and were well out in midstream when a man found that he had left something at the granary.

"Already the tide was too far out for him to risk going back. Libby could hear them call out about it.

"'I'll go after it!' she cried. 'I'll bring it out in my boat.'

"And forgetting all about the flood, out she went, with never a thought of the extra water from the river's flood or of the heavy driftwood in the way.

"Out she went and reached the scow safely. Her mother saw her as the little

steamer pulled out with the scow; saw the skiff bobbing like a cork in the waves; saw the swirling logs bearing down upon the frail craft, and six-year-old Libby trying to row back to shore against an outgoing tide.

"The sea water was all mixed with the muddy river water and there was so much more of it than usual that instead of just running out easily, as she was used to having it run, it was rushing out like a flood.

"Well, there was the little girl out on the water, and it looked as if she must be thrown from the boat. Just as Libby left the scow, her mother, who had come down to the granary, saw her; 'Oh, Libby!' she would call out. 'Look! Look! Look! That big log just behind you, dear!'

"And the little hands would turn the boat so that the drifting log passed beyond.

"And a big pile of brush would threaten—

"'Quick, Libby!' she would cry again. 'Oh, be quick, child, there on your left, that brushpile!'

"She ran down the shore as she called, but fast as she ran, she was no match for the flood tides.

"Again and again she called; again and again the child skillfully changed her course.

"She could see the tiny hands straining at the oars, and she knew that, though she could manage a boat in any ordinary water, this swift-moving, danger-filled stream was proving too much for her strength, and instead of coming straight from the scow to her own landing, as usual, she was already far downstream, and every time she had to change her course to avoid the drifting logs, she slipped farther out toward the open Sound.

HE PULLED HER IN TO SAFETY

"The mother must have made quite a bit of noise with her cries, for a man on the shore heard her, saw the danger, and waded out into the water, hip-deep, to try to reach Libby.

"And then Libby, cool-headed little thing, reached out one of her oars to him and held tight to it while he pulled her in to safety!"

GEORGE AND THE INDIANS

"THERE is one more story, Kitsie, my dear," said Aunt Pat, "which you must hear before we get into Seattle.

"That is the one my dear Mr. Himes told me, about a terrible fright he had when the Indians were on the war-path in the Northwest Country in the year 1855.

"George lived on one of the new farms in the Fir-Tree Country, and like all the other farms out here it was just a little clearing set down in a great forest of giant trees.

"The nearest settlement was seven miles away, and the little log school, which George and his little sister Helen attended, was three miles away.

"There wasn't any road from the farm to the school, but there was a narrow Indian trail which led most of the distance

through the deep woods, and then across the open prairie.

"Very early in the morning they had to start out, because Helen's little five-year-old legs wouldn't go very fast, and they had to be at school when lessons began, and that was at eight o'clock.

"From eight o'clock until noon they studied; then they played for an hour, and from one to half-past four they had lessons again.

"Now, half-past four on a misty, dreary winter day is nearly dark, and often there was a light in the cabin window when the little folks reached home.

"That school wasn't like any school you have ever seen; it had a big fireplace at one end, with a chimney built of sticks and mud. There weren't any little smooth desks with an inkwell, and a place for books; instead, there was a bench made of half a split log, which ran around two

two sides of the room, with the rough log walls for a back.

"On the other wall of the room was a long shelf, and, when the children needed a desk to write on, they had to stand up and put their paper on that rough shelf, and write standing up.

"Of course, the door was in the end opposite the fireplace, and just outside the door was a short bench with a bucket of water on it, and a tin dipper from which all the children drank, and, bless you! not one of them had ever so much as heard of a germ, and they drank from that dipper thirstily and happily.

"Often when George and Helen went through the woods they saw deer leaping across the path, rabbits darted here and there, chipmunks blinked at them and scuttled away, and all sorts of birds fluttered among the branches and twittered to each other.

"And when they came out on the open prairie, wild flowers grew thick as a carpet, but never, never a human being would they meet, except once in a while a soft-footed moccasined Indian, wrapped about in his blanket from his head to his heels.

"These strange dark men, with their long black hair and peering black eyes, were for the most part friendly, and they so often greeted the children with a smile that they had just about got over their first terror of them when rumors began to come, about a change in the Indians.

"Men said that the savages were acting very strangely and the white men would better beware.

"One day, when school was nearly over and the children were drowsily droning over their books, the door suddenly burst open and a young man thrust his

head in long enough to cry, 'Get to the stockade as quickly as possible! The Indians are on the war-path!'

"'Oh, George!' little Helen cried, 'how-ever shall we get home? George, George, will they kill us? Will the Indians kill us?'

"''Course not, Helen,' George answered; he was eleven years old and he knew he must be brave. 'They never have killed us yet, have they? Well, then, don't be afraid.'

"Silently the little school broke up, and the trembling children started over the fast-darkening trails.

"Across the prairie it wasn't so bad, but in the forest, where the great trees shut out most of the daylight, it was almost night.

"Running as fast as Helen could go, panting and stumbling and sometimes whispering and sobbing a little, they

somehow got over the dreadful three miles and burst into the cabin.

"'Mother!' George shouted, 'has father come home? 'Cause if he hasn't I don't know what we'll do. The Indians are on the war-path; there's been a massacre in White River Valley and —'

"George's mother put her hand on his shoulder and for a minute they looked at each other without another word.

"Then, giving him a gentle pat, she said very quietly, 'Oh, I guess not, George. Who told you that the Indian war had broken out?'

"Then, when he told her of the warning at the schoolhouse, her face grew white, the veins stood out on her neck, and she pressed her lips tight to still their trembling.

"Her voice sounded hollow and strange, as she said, 'Son, Father did not come home to-day, and he has the gun with

him. You are only a little boy. I don't know what we shall do. You will have to do the chores, then go and see if you can get John Wood to come and stay with us.'

"It was terrible to go out again from the shelter of the house and Mother's presence. George felt very little and helpless, but he must not let Mother know.

"Outside the rain dripped ceaselessly, and it was autumn dusk, and, as Mother had said, they had no gun.

"But he remembered a stick that he had used as a rabbit-killer. It was long and smooth, with a heavy, club-like knot on one end, and he knew right where it was.

"'I'll take my club,' he told himself, 'and I guess if I can hit a little hopping rabbit with it I could surely smash a great big Indian that can't run any faster than I can.'

"Out he went into the yard, chopped

and carried in the kindling and the wood to last overnight and the next day, fed and milked the cow, and did all the little things one calls 'chores' which have to be done on every farm.

"Then he went in and said, 'Well, Mother, I guess I'm ready to start. Don't you be afraid. I'll have John Wood here before long with a good gun, and then we'll be all right.'

"And he left his mother with her babies and Helen and stepped out into the night.

"There was, by this time, scarcely light enough to see, and if he had not known the trail well, I doubt if he could have found his way.

"His heart beat till it nearly choked him, and every snapping twig beneath his feet was a fresh cause for alarm. The trail led through the woods all the way, and at one point dropped sharply down a hill and crossed a tumbling stream.

"It was just at the crossing of that stream that the big scare came."

Kitsie shivered and looked serious as the story reached the point where the "big scare" came in, and said, "I don't see how his mother would let him go when it was so awfully dangerous and he hadn't any gun."

Aunt Pat replied, "Pioneer mothers had to do many things, dear, which tore at their heartstrings, and great as his terror was out on the lonely, danger-filled trail, I doubt if he suffered as she did.

"Well, he went on carefully and safely enough till he came to the hill. There the mud grew slippery and he dreaded the stream at the bottom of the hill.

"He walked slowly, steadying himself by the wet branches of the undergrowth till he reached the banks of the creek.

"Now, there were no bridges anywhere in the Puget Sound Country in 1855;

when people crossed streams, they either rode across on horseback, went in a canoe, or, most commonly of all, walked a foot-log.

"Walking a log in daylight was nothing to George, but to keep his footing on a log made slippery as glass by the rain, and that in almost total darkness, was too much.

"What's more, his knees trembled with fear and he was not nearly so steady as usual. So, getting down on his hands and knees, he started to crawl across.

"He was just venturing well out over the stream when — right over his head he heard a weird sound —

"'Whoo-oo-oo-oo!' it said. 'Whit-whit-woo-oo-oo —' and all the forest echoes seemed to snatch up the sound and call back a mournful 'whoo-oo-oo!'

"Down went the little boy flat on his face, holding fast to the log with both

hands and feet. And for a minute he thought that his heart sure enough had come up into his throat, for he felt himself choking.

"But only for a minute, then he said under his breath, 'Gee! nothing but an old hoot-owl, he nearly scared me to death.'

"He went on then and found John Wood, and brought him back to take care of his mother and the little ones.

"Sure enough, there was Indian war, but the savages passed by the home of George Himes, and he and all his family lived to see the forest turned into farms and towns and cities. And he and Helen rode in an automobile along a paved road that runs where the old Indian trail used to be, from their house to the school."

THE END

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